

Serial No. 10/770,928, filed 2/3/04

REMARKS

Claims 10-18 are presently pending in the application. Claim 10 is in independent form.

Claim 16 has been amended to correct the discrepancy between the drawings and claim 16. Paragraph 14 has similarly been amended to address the objection to the Specification.

Claims 10, 15 and 16 were rejected under §102(b) over Pinch. The Examiner has acknowledged that "the protrusion 70 is a separate member...and therefore is a first interlocking feature on the exterior surface." Claim 10 requires the exterior surface to define the first interlocking feature. By the Examiner's own admission, Pinch cannot meet this limitation since Pinch requires an additional element secured onto the exterior surface. That is, the exterior surface itself does not define a first interlocking feature, as required by claim 10. Accordingly, Pinch cannot meet the limitations of claim 10.

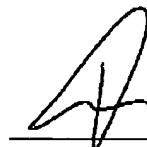
Claims 10, 11 and 17 were rejected under §102(b) over Palovcik. The Examiner improperly interprets the tube and collar as meeting the claim limitations. Palovcik cannot meet "a second interlocking feature coacting with said first interlocking feature to affix" the members together because Palovcik needs a weld 66 to affix the tube and collar. While the tube and collar are in contact with each other, there is nothing in Palovcik to indicate that they are "tightly" in contact, and even so, use of the weld 66 establishes that they are not affixed.

Claims 10, 12, 14, 17 and 18 were rejected under §102(e) over Creek. Creek is not prior art. The present application has a priority date of August 27, 2001 through a priority claim under §121. The divisional claim was properly made upon the initial filing of the divisional application, and indicated on the filing receipt. The earliest effective filing date of Creek is April 3, 2002, which is after the effective filing date of the present application. Accordingly, Creek cannot be prior art. The §103 rejection relying upon Creek must also be withdrawn.

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It is believed that no additional fees are due, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482, in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds, for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,



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